

Message Text

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65-61

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MC-02

ACDA-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EUR-12 AID-05 (ISO) W

----- 039793

R 021350Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9529

INFO USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 4040

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS TS

SUBJ: POSSIBLE TUNISIAN POSTPONEMENT OF ACQUISITION OF

U.S. AIRCRAFT

REF: CHUSLOT MESSAGE 0113252, JULY 1975

1. TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE REVIEWING ITS DECISION TO PURCHASE -- AT LEAST AT THIS TIME -- EITHER A-4 OF F-5 AIRCRAFT, FOR WHICH LETTERS OF OFFER WERE PROVIDED AT TUNISIAN REQUEST. IT DOES NOT RPT NOT APPEAR THAT GOT HAS IN MIND BUYING SIMILAR AIRCRAFT ELSEWHERE, BUT RATHER THAT FINANCIAL PRESSURES MAY BE INDUCING TUNISIANS TO GIVE PRIORITY TO SUCH AIR-DEFENSE EQUIPMENT AS RADAR AND SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES.

2. THIS ASSUMPTION IS REINFORCED BY: (A) FACT THAT GOT HAS ALLOWED JUNE 30 DEADLINE FOR RESPONDING TO LETTER OF OFFER TO LAPSE AND WITHOUT ASKING FOR EXTENSION OF DEADLINE; AND (B) MOD SECRETARY OF STATE BENNOUR'S COMMENT JULY 2 TO AMBASSADOR THAT AIRCRAFT EXTREMELY COSTLY AND ACQUISITION OF FIXED AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT ASSUMES HIGHER PRIORITY.

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3. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT TUNISIANS ARE DICKERING FOR ANY OTHER AIRCRAFT. FRENCH AMBASSADOR INDICATES NO TUNISIAN INTEREST IN FRENCH MIRAGES AND, INDEED, LATEST TUNISIAN LIST OF EQUIPMENT REQUESTED OF FRENCH SPECIFICALLY OMITTS ARICRAFT (TUNIS 4037).

4. INSTEAD, GOT'S INABILITY TO OBTAIN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM ARAB OIL PRODUCER, TERMINATION OF USG GRANT ASSISTANCE AND EVIDENT RELUCTANCE OF FRENCH TO INCREASE THEIR MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA IS OBVIOUSLY FORCING TUNISIANS TO ESTABLISH RIGID PRIORITIES.

5. BENNOUR TOLD AMBASSADOR JULY 2 THAT GOT IS FRANKLY DISAPPOINTED AT INABILITY OF TUNISIA'S "TRADITIONAL FRIEND" TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING. HE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT USG NOT ADEQUATELY APPRECIATIVE OF TUNISIA'S MILITARY NEEDS IN LIGHT OF LIBYAN THREAT. (HE CONTENDS LIBYANS ARE BUILDING TWO AIRFIELDS CLOSE TO TUNISIAN BORDER.) HE STRESSED THAT TUNISIA CONTINUES TO ATTACH HIGHEST IMPORTANCE TO ITS RELATIONS WITH US, BUT GOT HAS NO OPTION BUT TO OBTAIN MILITARY EQUIPMENT WHEREVER IT CAN. SEELYE

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
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